

with the Clinton Administration had been purchased with campaign contributions. Citing these allegations, the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, chaired by Sen. Fred Thompson (R-Tenn.), conducted a series of hearings relating to campaign fund-raising for the 1996 elections. As one aspect of that investigation, Sen. Thompson's Committee subpoenaed a broad range of documents from DOI relating to its Hudson decision, and took depositions from a number of DOI employees involved with that decision. The Committee also deposed lobbyists, and DNC and White House officials.

Thompson's Committee sought to conduct a private interview of the Secretary about the Hudson decision. Because Interior officials felt that the Committee had selectively leaked testimony that suggested wrongdoing by the Department, the Secretary declined to be interviewed privately, but agreed to testify publicly during the hearings. The Secretary sent an Oct. 10, 1997, letter to Sen. Thompson confirming his unwillingness to be interviewed privately. In doing so, he also made a statement about the Eckstein conversation and the Hudson application:

[W]hile I did meet with Mr. Eckstein on this matter shortly before the Department made a decision on the application, I have never discussed the matter with Mr. Ickes or anyone else in the White House. Mr. Ickes never gave me instructions as to what this Department's decision should be, nor when it should be made.

I do believe that Mr. Eckstein's recollection that I said something to the effect that Mr. Ickes wanted a decision is correct. Mr. Eckstein was extremely persistent in our meeting, and I used this phrase simply as a means of terminating the discussion and getting him out the door. It was not the first time that I have dealt with lobbyists by stating that the Administration expects me to use my good judgment to resolve controversial matters in a timely fashion, nor do I expect it to be the last.